

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

the twentieth century before us. When looking at all these statistics and the price tags that we have put on subsidies, on the towers and the hotels, I wonder if we could not find enough resources and funds to put to work some imaginative scheme such as the ones outlined at that conference.

Let me go into this matter a little bit. It was proposed that the federal government buy all the railbeds that exist in Canada, whether they belong to the CNR, the CPR, the BCR or the Northern Alberta Railway. We would relieve the railways of the burden of the maintenance and operation of the railbeds, take these over and operate them in the same way that we operate the airways. Where we have air traffic controllers and air terminals, we would have rail traffic controllers and rail terminals. But we would leave the operation of the railways to those people who can do it best, that is, those people who have goods to ship; in other words, private enterprise, people who know how to do something well and make money out of it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Oberle: My friends to the left of course would not agree with me. They do not know what private enterprise is all about. They think it is some big deal in which you take part down here because you do not have the guts to do anything by yourself.

The scheme to which I was referring would be a challenge to the imagination. I can see companies losing \$15 million in three months because they cannot ship their lumber to the BC coast. They could buy a locomotive with a number of cars and apply to the railway traffic controller or the department that would set up the rail traffic and say, "We are shipping 250 cars a month. We would like to buy a locomotive. Can you allocate us some time on a particular railway to ship our lumber to a particular destination?" To me, that would challenge the imagination of people who realize that we are heading for disaster in Canada.

I imagine that farmers' unions might wish to establish their own co-operatives, buy their own locomotives or trains, new, imaginative carriage facilities, elevators, and so on, to transport grain. In my view, such a scheme would make sense in Canada where our distances are not 75, 100 or 250 miles but 3,000 miles to be covered by trains shipping goods to the market. The minister should really think in terms of whether Canada should not invent its own transportation system which would be responsive to the needs of the country which has very special problems in view of its large distances and climatic conditions.

I should also like to relate some of the minister's statements to some of the things that have happened and some of the things to which we are aspiring in British Columbia. British Columbia is the province on the other side of the mountains. I say that because it is often confused with the rest of western Canada. Although British Columbia is in western Canada, our problems are somewhat different. I wonder who will live in those towers and hotels and who will patronize the cocktail lounges down below. Ever since I have been travelling every week throughout the land—and I consider myself something of an executive and subsidize my own travels—when I go to these places and look around I do not see the

[Mr. Oberle.]

man on the street in there. The people I see there mostly are executives or salesmen heading for sales meetings.

I do not see there people who have a hard time supplying their families with everyday necessities. The man who patronizes these places does not really have a need for any of these facilities, because there are many of them everywhere and they are built by people who make a lot of money out of them because they know how to run them and what services to supply. I really do not think that the Canadian people have any business building any more of these hotels or towers.

Now I should like to speak about British Columbia—a wonderful place. We have some very special problems there. One of them is that we are competing with the coast port, that is, Vancouver. As a result, the rest of the province is totally neglected. For instance, we might buy some steel in Hamilton, Ontario, that goes to the west coast and when it gets to Prince George, which is a city 600 miles of rail travel away from Vancouver, even though it travels by direct route to Prince George it costs 60 cents a hundred pounds more than it would if you shipped it to Vancouver, 600 miles farther. Sometimes such things are hard to understand. That was the kind of message we hoped the minister would get from the western opportunities conference, and these were the kind of stories we were telling him.

One would think that in a province the central city of which has more than 100,000 people living in its immediate area, one would establish first of all an industrial park with rail lines. The industrial park that exists in Prince George is right in the middle of the city, of the whole shebang, as the minister and as the leader of the NDP said. The city council said to the railway people, "We would like you to move the rail lines out 15 or 20 miles and establish an industrial park from which you could branch out to tap the resources of the vast hinterland reaching out 800 miles to the Yukon border. You could tie it to the Yukon and bring down the resources from there that at present are being shipped down the American coast and brought back up by some weird design". The railways do not have the money to do any such thing.

In Prince George we would like to see a main line terminus established. It would branch out to the great city of Prince Rupert and from there to Vancouver. We would like to see the city established as a terminal from which the freight rates would be polarized, such as in Edmonton or Calgary: these cities are central and it makes sense to distribute goods from there, but it does not make sense to use one terminal for the whole of British Columbia. It does not make sense to have the only terminal in Vancouver and to establish all freight rates from there even though goods have to travel 600 miles farther than if they are dispatched from Prince George.

There are some of the questions that people in my constituency ask. We see ourselves subsidizing hotels and a big tower in Toronto. People in Prince George or Fort Nelson are not likely to visit that tower in Toronto. How in the heck would they ever get there? They can hardly make it to Fort St. John, 300 miles away, because CP Air charges almost double the fare charged for the same distance between Toronto and Montreal. These people have serious problems and are asking: Why can we not build a